

# Master Plan Variance

June 2017

**Property Name:** Flambeau River State Forest (Rusk, Sawyer, Price County)

**Date Master Plan was Approved:** September 2010

## Variance to the Master Plan

This variance will authorize the designation and use of approximately five miles of Hervas Road as an ATV/UTV route to provide a connector with local town road networks, and designate 300 feet of Connors Lake boat landing road for winter-only ATV/UTV use. These specific designations are not currently authorized in the master plan.

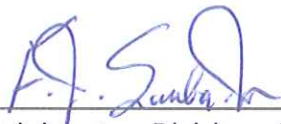
## Specific Plan Change

*2010 Master Plan page 148 (Recreation Management Section) and page 154 (Road Management Section).  
The following management prescription will be added.*

### Management prescriptions

*Designate approximately five miles of Hervas Road as an ATV/UTV route to provide a connector with local town road networks. Designate 300 feet of Connors Lake boat landing road for winter-only ATV/UTV use.*

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Administrator, Division of Forestry

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

6/9/17

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Variance**

There is a large network of ATV/UTV trails and routes located within and surrounding the Flambeau River State Forest (FRSF). The FRSF has an ATV/UTV trail system of 34 miles running north to south with a small loop trail centrally located. The FRSF ATV trail is connected to the Tuscobia State Trail and USFS Dead Horse Trail System to the north, which provides significant access to ATV trails and routes. The FRSF ATV/UTV trail “ends” at the southern most part of the property at a designated trail head at County Highway M. Short segments of the current FRSF trail are located on state forest roads for mixed motorized use and designated as routes. The Town of Hawkins, in Rusk County, to the south of the state forest is mostly in private ownership and includes several services and residents. A majority of town roads in the area throughout the forest have been designated as ATV/UTV routes as well as some Rusk County Forest roads. The town routes are adjacent to the state forest and at times ATV/UTV use “ends” at the state forest road. There has been an increased interest to provide connector routes using state forest roads with town road routes.

In addition, there has been an increased interest in accessing lakes using ATV/UTV for winter ice fishing. Over the past several years, local units of government have designated town and county roads for ATV/UTV use adjacent to, and connected to, department owned boat landing roads. These roads are typically short segments and authorization for winter ATV/UTV use is needed to make a connection from the lake to the town and county ATV route.

There have been additional requests for other state forest roads to allow ATV/UTV use. These requests will be addressed in the broader department Recreation Opportunities Analysis effort and associated FRSF road evaluation starting in 2018. The Hervas Road evaluation is being addressed now given the master plan objective and intent and specific provision to identify a connector trail on the southern end of the Forest. There has also been significant public interest for Hervas Road as it is currently the only section that does not authorize ATV/UTV in a county and town road network.

### **Hervas Road**

The Flambeau River State Forest (FRSF) Master Plan, approved in 2010, identified an objective to evaluate and establish an ATV/UTV trail to connect the existing 34 miles of FRSF ATV trails with Rusk County trails and local town roads designated as ATV routes on the south end of the state forest. A DNR facilitated stakeholder group, including ATV clubs, towns and counties, evaluated a range of options for a trail connector between 2011 and 2014. The outcome was a master plan variance to designate a department-owned road, Skinner Creek Road, as an ATV/UTV route. Recently there has been interest in expanding the ATV/UTV route to include approximately five miles of Hervas Road to connect with additional town road ATV routes.. Hervas Road is a recently improved moderately developed road and the ecological and economic impacts would be minimal.

### **Connors Lake road and landing**

Users and community services have expressed interest in winter ATV/UTV access to and from Connors Lake for ice fishing. An existing department boat landing road that connects to CTH W, which is a designated ATV/UTV route. A plan variance is proposed to designate 300 feet of Connors Lake boat landing road for winter ATV/UTV use.

### **Anticipated Primary Benefits of the Proposed Variance:**

Create an ATV/UTV connector route by extending the existing 34 mile ATV/UTV trail to local communities and town road ATV routes.

### **Unavoidable Adverse Impacts:**

Increased mixed motorized use on an existing lightly used state forest road.

### **Compatibility with Statutes, Codes and Department Policies:**

Wis. Admin Code NR45. Wis. Stat. s. 23.116

### **How the Master Plan Supports the Proposed Variance**

#### **Motorized Trails Objective**

Provide sustainable, designated snowmobile and ATV trail riding opportunities as part of regional trail networks; and, as is feasible and compatible with other forest objectives, support the expansion of the regional trail networks. This plan provides for extending the ATV trails by approximately six miles to connect to regional trail systems to the east and south.

#### **Road Management Objectives**

Provide a network of roads on the FRSF that meet land management and recreation objectives, while minimizing environmental impacts.

### **Road Evaluation -ATV/UTV Route on Hervas Road**

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the ecological, economic, and social impacts of designating five miles of Hervas Road on the Flambeau River State Forest as a mixed motorized use road, authorizing ATV/UTV, in addition to highway licensed vehicles.

- **Address visitor requests for access, including seasonal uses.**

The route option was proposed by user groups, local residents and town governments. There is a high desire for additional connectors from the south that connect to the FRSF ATV/UTV trail with Town and County networks.

- **Are operationally feasible for the department to maintain based on the anticipated level of use.**

Hervas Road is a moderately developed road in excellent condition. The increased level of use by ATV/UTV is expected to be low. No significant increase in maintenance costs are expected based on the expected use.

- **Do not significantly impact natural resources based on the anticipated level of use.**

The route is an existing state forest road used for vehicle traffic and the addition of ATV/UTV use will not have significant impacts on natural resources.

- **Are physically capable of supporting the anticipated level of use.**

The road is in a moderately developed condition, gravel with a crown and ditch.

- **Provide economic benefits.**

Creating a connector will provide local economic benefits to the communities south of the forest. Users will have the ability to continue south of the existing FRSF ATV/UTV trail where services are located.

- **Are consistent with the property's legal and policy framework.**

The FRSF master plan supports ATV/UTV trails and routes and contributing to the regional network.

#### **The Public Review Process:**

A public comment period on this variance was open from April 20 to May 11, 2017. The variance used a 21-day comment period, posted on the web and distributed to the property e-gov mailing list. Direct outreach was conducted to user groups, Rusk County and the town of Hawkins.

#### **Description of the Support and/or Opposition to the Proposed Variance and Any Unresolved Issues or Concerns:**

During that period the DNR received two letters, eight emails and one petition. Both letters were in favor of the variance. Of the eight emails received, three were in favor, two were against the variance and one was unrelated to the variance. The DNR also received a petition.

One of the emails against the variance did not provide a reason, the other pointed out that the Flambeau is known nationwide as a quiet place to travel on the water. And they wondered, "can't it be just that?"

One of the letters received was from a private citizen while the other was from WATVA (the Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association), as mentioned above both were in favor of the variance.


The petition had 90 signatures and expresses support for the variance.

**Variance/Amendment Initiator or Author:** Teague Prichard

Job Title: State Forest Specialist

**Supporting Approvals**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Variance Author Date: 6-5-17

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Property Manager Date: 6-5-17

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Master Planning Manager Date: 6/7/17

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Bureau Director Date: 6-5-17

**Others with a special interest**

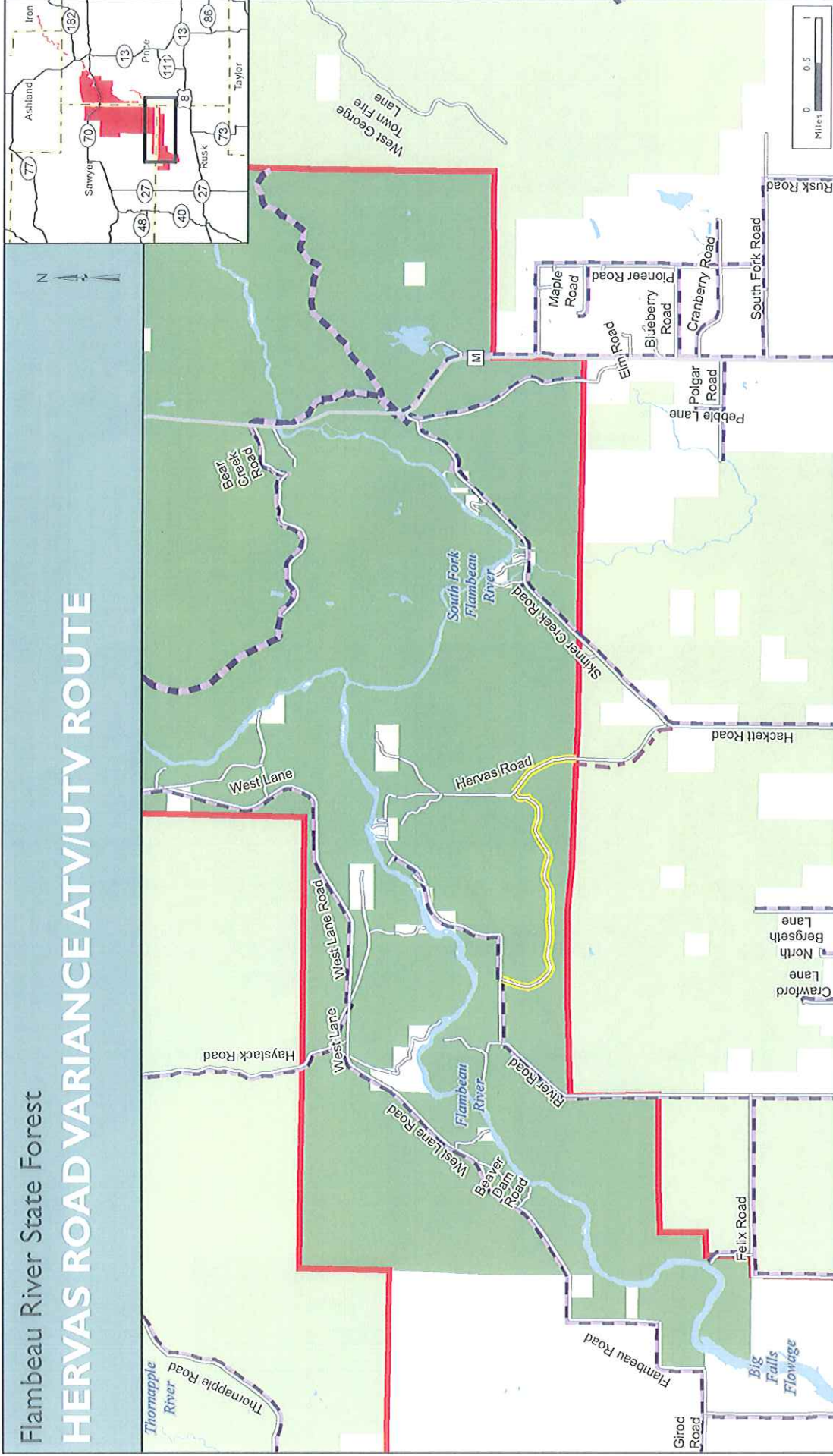
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Title: \_\_\_\_\_



# Flambeau River State Forest

## HERVAS ROAD VARIANCE ATV/UTV ROUTE



Proposed ATV/UTV Route

ATV/UTV Route

DNR Fee Title Lands

County Forest

Project Boundary

Flambeau State Forest

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Bureau of  
Facilities and Lands

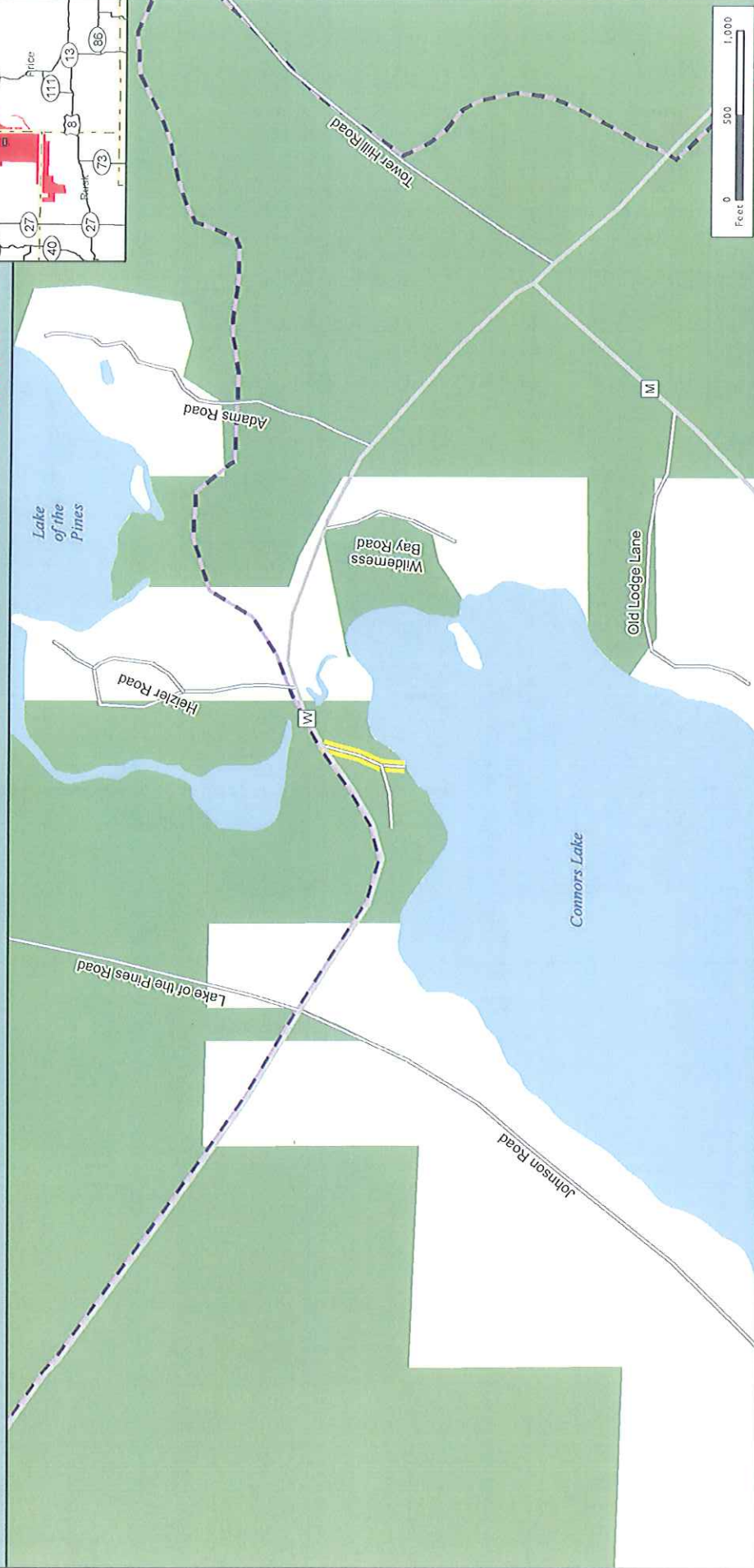
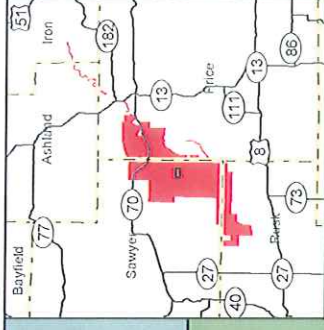
Jan 24, 2017 jpk

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Flambeau River State Forest

# STATE FOREST ROAD VARIANCE ATV/UTV ROUTE

DRAFT



Proposed ATV/UTV Route

ATV/UTV Route

DNR Fee Title Lands

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Bureau of  
Facilities and Lands

Jan 23, 2017 jpk

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